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LETTER DATED 28 JULY 1997 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GEORGIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to transmit herewith a copy of the letter from the President of Georgia, Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze, to the Secretary-General, regarding his recent visit to New York and the perspectives of the comprehensive settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia.

I should be most grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Peter CHKHEIDZE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Letter dated 28 July 1997 from the President of Georgia addressed to the Secretary-General

It is with great pleasure that I recall our recent meeting in New York.

I am pleased to note that the new vision of the ways to settle the conflict in Abkhazia has found understanding in the United Nations and we appreciate your readiness to invigorate the activities of the United Nations in the negotiation process. Due to your efforts, talks were held between the Georgian and Abkhaz sides at Geneva from 23 to 25 July, attended by the representatives of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the countries making up the group of the Friends of the Secretary-General on Georgia. This United Nations-sponsored meeting attests to the great importance that the international community attaches to the settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia.

Despite all the efforts, however, the talks were fraught with serious problems. Above all it was the stubborn resistance of the forces that strive to prevent a more active and effective participation of the international community in resolving the conflict. The Abkhaz party regarded the statement made by the representatives of the Friends of Georgia group at the meeting as "insulting to Abkhazia" and as "an attempt to alter the format of the negotiations". Only the painstaking efforts of your special representative for the region, Ambassador Liviu Bota, and the Friends of Georgia group made it possible to avoid failure and allowed the talks to continue and proceed in a more constructive manner.

The failure to recognize that the peace process must not be monopolized by anyone is likely to further protract the resolution of the conflict, affecting thus the progress of the peace talks in the future. It is, therefore, imperative that the Security Council and the international community at large give an adequate assessment to this destructive position.

I firmly believe that the Geneva process should continue and I hope that the next round of negotiations will be held in September under United Nations auspices and with the participation of the Russian Federation, as a facilitator, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Friends of Georgia countries.

(Signed) Eduard SHEVARDNADZE